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For Immediate Release: December 10, 2007
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Somerville School Fire Started in Electrical Room Heater

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Somerville Fire Chief Kevin W. Kelleher said their joint investigation has determined the most probable cause of the fire at the East Somerville Community School was an electrical problem in a fixed room heater. All of the classrooms had similar individual room heaters. The fire started in the early morning hours of Sunday, December 9, 2007 in a ground floor classroom at 115 Glen Street, Somerville.

Coan said, "A school fire causes so much disruption to a community affecting not only the issues and costs of alternative space, teaching materials, and transportation, but those professional networks and teams that support and nourish our children."

Chief Kelleher said, "This fire is a great tragedy for the students and staff of the East Somerville Community School and for the city as a whole." He added, "I want to commend the Somerville and mutual aid firefighters for containing the fire to the one wing."

The fire was jointly investigated by members of the Somerville Fire Department, the Somerville Police Department and State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

242 Fires Caused 5 Civilian Injuries & 3 Fire Service Injuries

In 2006, two hundred and forty-two (242) building fires in schools caused five civilian injuries, three fire service injuries and \$907,772 million in property damages, according to data collected by the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS). Problems with heating equipment accounted for 10% of these fires. Electrical problems caused 5%.

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